Evils of State-Controlled Education

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NATIONAL *v.* PROPRIETORY ECONOMICS

(*By K. G. Mashruwala*)

In my article *Handloom and Khadi* (*Harijan*, 12-7-'52) endorsing Rajaji's appeal to support handloom cloth I said that the Government must see that mill-cloth did not kill handloom cloth or Khadi. Let me discuss the subject further.

Proprietory Economy and Pricing

This is possible only if we revise our current ideas on Economics. Political or National Economy and Accounting must be differentiated from Individualist or Proprietory Economy and Accounting. In Individualist Economy or Accounting, the cost-price of an article is calculated by merely adding up the actual out-of-pocket expenses for raw and accessory materials, wages, rent, interest, depreciation, charges of implements etc. To this is added the expected earning of the proprietor. The amount of earning is expected to be sufficient to enable the proprietor to maintain himself and his dependents on a scale to which he is accustomed and to make some saving. If it is so, the industry is considered 'economic', i.e., profitable or paying. If otherwise, it is 'uneconomic'.

Proprietor *v.* Wage-earner

The proprietor is not concerned with the 'economic' sufficiency of the labourer's wage. It may not be sufficient even to meet the labourer's dire personal needs. If it does, the wage is regarded as liberal. The maintenance of the labourer's dependents is not the proprietor's concern. His continuous attempt is to reduce the cost price as much as possible and to increase his own earnings as much as possible.

Wage-bill and Profit

It is well known that in every institution, including an industry, the salaries and wages-bill is the biggest item of out-of-pocket expenses. Every economy made in salaries and wages reduces the cost of the article to a greater extent than an economy made on any other item. Hence the proprietor's principal concern is to reduce the amount of the wage-bill.

Reducing the Wage-bill

One way of doing this is to reduce the labourer's wage. Obviously, this method has a limit. The other method is to reduce the number of labourers without diminishing the quantity of production, by devising means for increasing the hourly or daily output of each labourer. What is known as the 'industrial revolution' or 'industrialization' is but the extensive application of the second method through power-propelled machinery.

The Machine Age

Science has enabled the industrialist to devise machines which need only one man to operate them, but can turn out the work of as many as two hundred labourers. The result is that if that one labourer has to be paid even five or ten times more than the former labourer, the proprietor effects a great saving in his wage-bill. The one fortunate labourer who gets the employment feels that his condition has improved; the proprietor's earning is increased; and, since the saving on the wage-bill is considerable and the production not less than before, he is able to reduce the sale price of the article. This makes the consumer also feel that he is getting things cheaper than before, and he welcomes the machine age.

The Unemployment Problem

The only people who suffer are the great body of the independent artisans or wage-earners, who have been 'dis-employed' by this apparent economy. Even with all the advances in science, the enormous multiplication of wants, the manufacture of new types of consumer goods, and the creation of new types of social and utility services, it has not been possible to absorb all the persons dis-employed by the various machines. And the competition between the machine and the labourer is not yet over. Every year we see new labourer-reducing devices being invented. As a result all those millions of dis-employed people who were formerly able to maintain themselves and their dependents with self-respect, have now become themselves dependent upon their relatives, friends and the alms-giving public. But in the system of Proprietory or Individualist Economy and Accounting, this is not taken into account. Ultimately the dis-employment of such large numbers becomes an intricate problem and the Government, whether it likes it or not, is compelled to attend to it.

National Economy Acts Differently

But Government cannot tackle the problem unless it distinguishes between Individualist Economy and Accounting and Political or

National Economy and Accounting. The latter is based on the principles of Joint Family Economy. A great and important item which is omitted in calculating the cost of an article in Proprietory Accounting, but which cannot be so neglected in Family Accounting, is the cost of maintaining the dependents of all the persons engaged in producing an article.

Illustration from Joint Family Economy

Let me explain this by an example.

Suppose there is a family of tailors consisting of ten members, of whom four are capable of doing full day's work, three do some tailoring along with other duties, and three are too old, or weak, or young to do any work, and have to be maintained or brought up by the family. Whether the family trade is thriving or dull, its monthly fare-bill is Rs. 200. If it cannot earn that amount, it is forced to run into debt. If it earns more, it can save a little.

Suppose it manages to have a sewing machine. The machine is able to sew six times more than the simple needle. But obviously, only one of the members can sit at the machine at a time. If, formerly, the family could sew six shirts a day, it can easily sew a dozen now. The man who sits at the machine naturally sews more shirts than the rest. But according to the system of accounting followed in an undivided joint family, neither his earnings nor the expenses incurred on his account are distinguished from the earnings and expenses of the rest. All the shirts, whether sewn by hand or by the machine, would be charged at the same price, and the earnings of the family would be accounted together as common income; so too, all the expenses. If the trade was brisk, the family might purchase a second machine, but that would not be for throwing those who sewed with the simple needle on the street, as no longer required. Nor would they be allowed to sit idle. They would still be sewing as many shirts as they could, and were in demand. If all the shirts they sew, whether on machine or with the hand, cannot be sold, all of them might relax their effort. Assuming that the family could only do tailoring work, and would have otherwise to sit idle, if it found that there was no sufficient work for two machines, it would dispose of one. But in a joint family no member would be turned out of the home. Either the whole family prospered or the whole was reduced to penury. If some members went elsewhere to earn, it would be in the interest of the whole family.

True National Economy

This is the principle of Joint Family Economy and Accounting, and is different from that of Individualist Economy. Political or National Economy is and ought to be an extension of the principle of Joint Family Economy and Accounting, and not of the Individualist or Proprietory system.

Need of National or Common pool and pricing

Accordingly, the State, as the *paterfamilias* of the nation, must regard all cloth (or any other article) of the same quality, howsoever produced, as of equal value. Let it decide how much cloth it would get produced and by what method. A member of the nation working on power-driven looms or spindles will necessarily produce far more cloth or yarn than one working on the hand-loom or the *charkha*. That does not mean that the value of the former's labour is to be assessed higher than that of the latter, or that the sale price of the machine-made fabric is to be different from that of other cloth of the same quality. If the handicraft mode of production is also needed, either because more cloth is needed than what can be produced on the machine, or because there is no other work in which all able members of the national family can be gainfully employed, that mode of production cannot be dispensed with. The State, as the *paterfamilias* of the nation, is in duty bound to maintain all of them, and on an equal level. Accordingly, if say, one crore of people are engaged in the different methods of producing cloth, and 20 crores on producing yarn by the different methods, the wages of all of them must be equal, and the total cost of cloth and yarn must be distributed on the entire production.

Economy of "Unto This Last"

To put this in another way, the introduction of a spinning or a weaving mill in the country cannot be for the purpose of competing with loom-cloth or hand-spun yarn by selling its produce at cheaper rates. If the mills make hand-weaving and spinning superfluous by over-production, it should be the mills that should be retrenched and not the weavers and spinners, unless the State is able to provide alternative employment to the weavers, spinners and others disemployed by the mills. It should be realized that the persons thrown out of employment by the mills have to be maintained by someone or other, so long as they are not otherwise employed. And if the State does not find food and employment for them, it is not discharging its duty as the *paterfamilias* of the nation. The application of the Individualist method of Economics and Accounting to the State, must cause disruption, chaos and misery in the nation, as it would in a joint family.

It is the duty of the State to see that either every handloom weaver and spinner is fully employed in some occupation, which will give him the same wage as to a mill-weaver and spinner, or to put the price of mill-produced goods on a par with those produced by handicraft methods. All cloth of the same quality is similar, and must have the same price. So too, all producers of cloth must be regarded as on an equal footing and must get equal maintenance. If the implements of production in the hands of the producers are not all of the same type, and if such differences cause difference in the output of each worker in spite of equal labour, this cannot be made a reason for giving a less wage to or retrenching some of them.

Any other theory of 'economic efficiency' or 'economically paying' occupation is inconsistent with Political or National Economics and Accounting.

Wardha, 12-7-'52
Harijan, 19-7-'52

[The above article of late Shri K. G. M. is reproduced for a specific purpose. As the reader knows, I have been lately pleading in these columns for the need to neutralize and remove competition between large-scale industries and small-scale or cottage and village industries like the textiles, oil etc. The way of orthodox economics is to work through cess and subsidy in favour of the weaker limb. This is usually done in a patronizing and condescending manner. The measure is undertaken in a grudging manner and is taken to be for a short while. This is no way any encouragement to the weaker limb to feel free and grow. The proper thing to do would be to find a way for honourable and respectful co-existence of both.

We have accepted that there should be a common production programme for various sections of the same industry. This implies a basis of non-competition among them, rather mutually helpful and co-operative consideration. This can be achieved by a consequential idea that we must have a common price structure for all the sections. Shri K. G. M.'s article above provides us with a theoretical argument and philosophy for it.

I learn that such a thing cannot be said to be altogether new; it has already been profitably applied in iron and steel industry. The Tata Iron & Steel Company which is the biggest producer of steel in the country with a production capacity of 8,00,000 tons produces steel most cheaply, while the cost of production of steel by the Mysore Iron & Steel Company (capacity 40,000 tons) is the highest. The cost of production of the Indian Iron & Steel Company (capacity 3,00,000 tons) comes somewhere in between. Left to normal economic forces, it would probably have been impossible for the Indian Iron & Steel Company and the Mysore Iron & Steel Company to stand in competition with the Tata Iron & Steel Company and would naturally have been forced to close down but for the price policy that has been adopted by the Government of India. With a view to maintaining the steel production at a high level (steel is a scarce commodity in this country, the demand considerably outstriping the present production), the Government of India adopted the policy of meeting the full cost of production including a fair margin of profit to the various producers and marketing steel at an average pooled price.

This instance is just to illustrate the idea discussed above. I invite readers to discuss it with me even to find out how far it can help us to arrive at a sound national policy and programme, wherein both the small-scale as also large-scale industries may co-exist, to the cherished end of securing full employment for all of us and necessary and sufficient production for our needs of home consumption and export also if necessary and desirable. Surely this will tend to having a socialistic pattern of society also.

17-2-'55 M. P.]

By Mahatma Gandhi
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MEDICAL EDUCATION AND RURAL UPLIFT *

(*By Rajkumari Amrit Kaur*)

The medical profession is, I have always held, the noblest of all professions and the preparation of the future doctor is a task to which it is impossible to devote too much attention.

When I was in the United States recently one of the things which struck me was the desire to orientate the training of the medical student in such a manner as to enable him to see the patient not merely in terms of certain affected parts of the body or of some deranged functions, but as a personality, organically related to his social and physical environment and therefore to interpret disease as a failure of adjustment to that environment.

In order to build up this picture it is not thought enough for the medical student to see the patient in the out-patient department or in the wards of a hospital. It is necessary that he should follow him into the home, get acquainted with his family and domestic circumstances and see for himself how various economic, social and psychological factors are contributing to his state of ill health.

The student must be in a position to advise the patient and his family how to deal with some of these factors themselves and, in other cases, to obtain from appropriate sources such as the public health authority and various voluntary bodies engaged in social welfare activities, the necessary help to rectify the defects that exist. In all this training the medical student is assisted by the Social Service Department of the Hospital with its team of efficient medical social workers and by his clinical teachers.

The way in which this type of training is woven into the structure of the medical curriculum may differ from medical college to medical college, but the purpose is there and some diversity in the methods of approach to achieve that purpose is eminently desirable in that it facilitates a comparison of the results that follow from individual methods.

In our country the emphasis has to be laid on rural uplift. I have therefore no doubt in my mind that all medical students should have a certain amount of their training in a village environment. This would not only give our students an idea of the immensity of our problems but would also render useful service to villagers in that particular area.

In my opinion these are all fundamental changes and I put forward the plea that our medical educationists and managements of medical colleges should consider seriously how far and in what manner such improvements as are considered desirable can be woven into the web of our own teaching programme.

* From an address she gave while performing the opening ceremony of the Medical College, Patiala, 4-2-'55.

HARIJAN

Feb. 26 1955

EVILS OF STATE-CONTROLLED EDUCATION

(*By Maganbhai P. Desai*)

A reader of the *Harijan* writes from Trichur, S. I., as follows :

"Please refer to para 1 (under caption 'Present Education') column 2, page 340 of the *Harijan* dated 18-12-'54. Vinobaji is reported to have said therein that 'Thus there seems to be no sense in the current system from the beginning to the end'. Again the last sentence of the para runs as follows: 'Thus it is all devoid of reason'.

"I am indeed surprised to read this outright devastating condemnation of the present system of education by such a careful and thoughtful man as Vinobaji. How can a system of education which produced during the last one century and a half so many great men such as Dadabhai Navaroji, Swami Vivekananda, Ravindra Nath Tagore, Tilak, Gokhale, Srinivasa Sastri, Mahatma Gandhi, Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das, Sarojini Naidu, Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajaji, K. M. Munshi, Vinobaji and hundreds of other eminent intellectuals, doctors, lawyers, high court judges, thinkers, writers, journalists, governors, chief ministers, educationists, industrialists etc., etc., be of 'no sense from the beginning to the end' and 'devoid of all reason'?"

The question is as old as the national education movement started by Gandhiji; and it has continued to be posed till this day. For example, only a few months back when the President spoke at Sanosra and at Ahmedabad last November and when Shri Morarjibhai Desai also spoke at the Vidyapith Convocation, a similar question was raised in the columns of a Bombay paper. As a matter of fact, the same paper had questioned similarly years ago (*vide Young India*, July 5, 1928), and Gandhiji had counter-questioned it as follows :

"Would Chaitanya, Nanak, Kabir, Tulsidas and a host of other reformers have done better if they had been attached from their childhood to the most efficiently managed English schools? Have the men named by the writer of the article in question done better than these great reformers? Would Dayanand have done better if he had become an M.A. of an Indian university?"

And speaking for himself he had said,

"In my opinion, whatever reaction for the better the persons named in the extracts had upon the people at large was due to the extent they retained their Eastern culture in spite of the adverse influence of the Western. I regard as adverse the influence of Western culture in this connection in the sense in which it interfered with the full effect that the best in Eastern culture might have produced on them. Of myself whilst I have freely acknowledged my debt to Western culture, I can say that whatever service I have been able to render to the nation has been due *entirely to* the retention by me of Eastern culture to the extent it has been possible. I should have been thoroughly useless to the masses as an anglicized denationalized being knowing little of, caring less for and perhaps even despising their ways, habits, thoughts and aspirations."

The answer may not perhaps be convincing to those who may fondly love to persist in the illusion of English education. For them I may better quote an English historian of Indian education under the British rule. Arthur Mayhew was in the I. E. S. and worked as the D. P. I. in the C. P. for a number of years. This is what he writes in his book, "The Education of India" (published in 1926) :

"By identifying the State in India with an educational policy, and undertaking to direct the education of the country in accordance with that policy, Bentinck was attempting a task which had at the time been contemplated for England only by a few radical minds, and was associated in the West generally with Prussia, rising phoenix-like from the disaster of Jena, or with the colossal and over-whelming self-condence of the Jacobins or a Napoleon." (p. 65)

"The identification of a necessarily neutral Government with a system of education has robbed that system of religious warmth, colour, and significance, and that the want of this has made the education unreal and unconvincing among peoples whose life, for good and bad, is fundamentally religious." (p. 67)

"Greatest of all evils, however, arising from a state system is its effect on the relations between the teachers and the taught. To realize this, we must compare the ideal teacher as he is envisaged by an indigenous community with the master produced by a state system." (p. 68)

"It was a lofty and inspiring ideal, resembling strangely in some respects the educational dreams of Plato." (p. 70)

"The master enmeshed in the network of our Indian system works with code in hand. For him, there is no 'unwritten law' or tradition. There are 'returns' to be submitted periodically, regulations to be followed, examinations in which a percentage of passes is to be obtained, and an inspector, more regular in his visitation than famine or the plague, who, in the course of a few minutes, must be convinced that no rule has been broken and that something practical has been done. It is hard to imagine a Thring, Arnold, or Sanderson thrown up by such a system. It will not produce a Sankara, Kabir, or Tagore in India." (p. 72)

"The system affords no chance of personality coming into play as an educational factor. It is terribly rare to see a real live man at work in an Indian schoolroom. Emergence of the real self, with all its prejudices and convictions, would scare the class, and probably produce an entry in the daily order-book, to be shown at the next inspection, reminding the man who is still a living ember that controversial subjects, particularly religion, politics, and social affairs, are debarred. What constitutes the real self must remain outside the school." (p. 73)

There are many more other things Mayhew notes in his book, which will, perhaps, not be cherished by orthodox lovers of English education. I may not quote all that here. I hope the little that is quoted above will amply justify the remarks made at present by persons like Vinoba, Jawaharlalji and others who keenly feel how the legacy of traditional English education hampers

the task of national reformation and rebuilding at every step.

However, we may not go into a controversy on what may be a matter of opinion. The right thing to do in this behalf would be to set ourselves to the onerous duty of quickly improving upon that legacy, which is admittedly bad, requiring radical reforms. Unfortunately, the small and privileged class of people produced by English education so behaves as to baulk these efforts; and untenable apologia for English education like the one quoted at the beginning are what that class puts up when challenged by the call of radical reforms in an educational system that stands condemned today by the very march of events and the nature of the demands made on it by the stirring times we now begin to live in and in which we want to function freely and effectively as one whole people.

11-2-'55

NOTES

The Bombay Milk Scheme

A press news says that the Bombay Municipal Corporation unanimously decided to request the State Government to reduce the price of whole milk supplied under the Government milk scheme. The mover of the resolution said that Government, instead of reducing the price of milk, was profiteering. Another member of the Corporation said that Government was now making daily profit of Rs 10,000. Still another member is reported to have said that he was not optimistic about the acceptance of the Corporation's request by the Government.

A very natural question, on reading as mentioned above, that arises in one's mind is, why the Corporation should not ask Government, to hand over the milk scheme itself to the Corporation. The city milk supply is really speaking a municipal affair. If the scheme is profitable, it is the greater reason that the Corporation should take it over rather than request reduction of milk price. On the other hand, it will save the State Government from an undertaking which it may better relinquish in favour of its rightful and proper agency.

15-2-'55 M. P.

Shri Vinoba's Health

The following is reproduced from a circular letter, dated 17-2-'55, of the Secretary of the A. I. Sarva Seva Sangh:

"Shri Vinoba was keeping well up to February 11. He has been suffering from stomach trouble for the last three days. Dr. Sharatchandra Mishra, M.D. of the Katak Medical College examined him yesterday evening at Ganijang. He has given the following report:

"Sant Vinobaji is having pain in his stomach since last three days. The pain became severe yesterday and continued throughout the day. Today morning the pain was also severe. He had history of duodenal ulcer since four years. With regulation of diet he was free from symptoms for the last two years. Lately he had made some alterations in his usual routine diet as a result of which there has been a relapse of the symptoms of duodenal ulcer. He has been examined today evening. There is pain in the stomach which is occurring at regular intervals when the stomach remains empty and relieved by taking a little milk. His general health shows no abnormality or deterioration. In spite of the pain he is having his walking tour in the countryside and giving his post-prayer discourses as usual. He is however advised to reduce the physical and mental strain to a minimum. There is no cause for anxiety."

13-2-'55

"Vinobaji had a good sleep in the last night and has no pain in the stomach at present."

14-2-'55

Bhoodan Figures

(Up to 10-2-1955)

S.N.	State	Total Collection (Acres)	Total Distribution (Acres)
1.	Assam	1,692	—
2.	Andhra	21,411	16
3.	Uttar Pradesh	5,16,819	67,040
4.	Orissa	1,28,814	708
5.	Karnatak	2,308	239
6.	Kerala	28,032	—
7.	Gujarat	37,120	2,128
8.	Tamilnad	29,334	316
9.	Delhi	9,245	90
10.	Punjab	10,668	73
11.	Bengal	9,028	675
12.	Bihar	22,36,265	5,684
13.	Madhya Pradesh	89,058	10,768
14.	Maharashtra	25,095	423
15.	Madhya Bharat	62,465	91
16.	Mysore	5,435	—
17.	Rajasthan	3,32,325	6,953
18.	Vindhya Pradesh	5,908	580
19.	Saurashtra	41,000	—
20.	Himachal Pradesh	2,025	—
21.	Hyderabad	1,05,130	25,129
22.	Bombay (Town)	123	—
	Total	36,99,300	1,20,913

Entire villages received in Bhoodan: 113

P. O. Buniyadganj,
Gaya (Bihar)

KRISHNARAJ MEHTA,
Office Secretary,
A. I. Sarva Seva Sangh

Socialism and Centralization

The Editor,
The *Harijan*

Dear Sir,

Capitalism is an evil; there can be no doubt about it. But is socialist economy a better alternative? In view of our knowledge about Soviet Russia which is the only example of a full fledged socialist economy provided by contemporary history, an affirmative reply to this question is not possible.

Socialists all over the world outside the Communist orbit are busy recasting old values because they are fully cognisant of the evils of centralization inherent in a socialist economy. In search of the causes of the breakdown of Russian experiment on economic life, they have found that the two evils of socialist economy of that country, namely bureaucracy which has stifled local initiative and has given rise to a new and worse class of exploiters, and top-heavy administration which has brought about colossal waste

of Russia's human labour and material wealth, are essentially due not so much to the totalitarian nature of thought governing it as to the concentration of means of production in the hands of one centralized authority. A socialist economy necessarily involves a high degree of concentration of productive forces, and, therefore, whatever may be the social philosophy underlying it, these two pitfalls, which defeat its very objective, cannot be avoided. Forced by such an analysis, democratic socialists all over the world find in Gandhiji's concept of decentralization of economy a cue for real creative thinking. But unfortunately we continue to pay a mere lip homage to this principle.

Yours faithfully,
J. G. TEWARI

New Delhi.

The Ghani-Oil Industry in India

India occupies a prominent place among the oil-seed producing countries of the world. Out of three and a half lakh tons of the world's total production, India produces no less than half a crore tons.

Part of this is eaten whole ; a part is exported and another part is stored for sowing purposes. The rest is crushed either in the *ghanis* or the mills to produce oil. Thus in 1951, 11 lakh tons of oil from various oil-seeds and one lakh ton of coconut oil was produced. On this basis the per capita consumption of edible oil in India is found to be as low as 0.35 oz. only, while according to the recognized world standard it should be 2. oz. or 5 tolas daily. To reach this target, we should produce 4 lakh tons more oil-seeds than at present.

In 1949-50, it was estimated that the mills crushed 22.12 lakh tons of various oil-seeds while the oil-*ghanis* crushed 11.56 lakh tons.

The greatest problem facing the bullock-*ghanis* operating in the rural areas today is their inability to secure the supply of oil-seeds at the proper time. This is because, while the mill-owners have the money to store the seeds, the oil-men being poor cannot do so. It is therefore necessary that the latter are enabled to obtain loans from banks on easy terms so that they may stock the oil-seeds.

The percentage of oil-extraction in mills is greater than that in the *ghanis*. But as against this dubious advantage the village-*ghanis* provide employment to larger numbers and their oil is far better in quality.

In 1921 five lakh people were engaged in the *ghani* industry. According to the statistics of the 1951 census, this number has dwindled to two lakh men only. Thus in the last 30 years, while three lakh men lost their job, the mills provided employment only to 45 thousand people.

The mills extract 40 per cent oil, while the *ghani* on the average extracts only 35.36 per cent, though the improved *ghanis* extract a little more.

If it could be made possible to make full use of the producing capacity of the existing *ghanis*, about 20 lakh tons more oil than at present could be produced which will give employment to twice the number of people engaged in this industry and distribute 16 crores rupees as wages in the villages which will obviously better the economic condition of the villagers.

(Translated from *Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh Warta*, 25th January, 1955)

VINOBA WITH BENGALI LITTERATEURS

(*By Suresh Ramabhai*)

During his twentyfive days of stay in Bengal Vinoba got an opportunity to see the heart of Bengal. He came in intimate contact with several aspects of Bengal life. Special mention must be made of his meeting with Bengal's litterateurs, which took place at Balrampur (Midnapore district) on the 19th of January last. On that day some of the most brilliant of them had gathered at the Abhaya Ashram. It was a very quiet and sublime function.

It began with the recitation of Tagore's famous poem, *Agradoot*, by Professor Ranendra Kumar Das. Shri Narendra Dev introduced to Vinoba the various men of letters who had gathered there from different parts of Bengal. Thereafter they requested Vinoba to give a few words of blessing.

Vinoba was visibly moved by this deep expression of love and respect. He went, as it were, into a *samadhi* and sat motionless with eyes closed for two minutes. Then began his remarkable discourse with an apology for his inability to speak in Bengali, which, however, he could very well read and follow. "I have tried," said he, "to gain Prem Parichaya (an acquaintance of love) with almost all the languages of the country. I could not, of course, establish a Gyan Parichaya (knowledge contact) with them, because it requires more time. In course of my Bhoodan Yajna tour I have had frequent occasions, to meet the litterateurs. I met them in Chirgaon in Jhansi district and later at Gaya and Patna. Now I have come to Bengal, the very home of literature. It is regarded as an eastern country where the Sun is said to rise earlier than elsewhere. Really it is difficult to point out which is East. For they have Far East also, moreover the earth is round whence what is East is also West and what is West is also East. Nevertheless, modern history bears it that new literature of modern India was born in Bengal. You will recollect scores of names who have adored Bengal's literature. The whole of the country does not know each of them. But there would hardly be a literate man not knowing the name of Bankim Babu, Rabindranath and Sarat Chandra, three immortal names of Indian literature. Among them it can be said that, after Kalidas none has symbolized Indian culture so thoroughly and given expression to it in so noble words as Rabindranath has done. Great poets have always been there; Tulasidas, Gyandev, Kabir, Kamban and others, but they are of different category. They are religious spirits. Those who viewed life as a whole from the point of view of a man of letters and not with that of the religious doctrine alone, might have been produced in the Punjab and Uttar Pradesh in the Upanishadic period. But after the age of Kalidas, it can be said that Bengal became the home of literature. I am, therefore, particularly grateful to you for this opportunity given to me of coming in contact with you."

Vinoba later pointed out that he could not claim to be a literary figure, nor anybody could inflict that charge upon him. "True that I have written," said he, "something in Marathi and it has been liked by the people. However, they do not take it as literature, but as religious thought. Hence I do not claim to be a litterateur, but I appreciate literature and know its value. In my childhood I was very fond of writing poetry. I used to compose a poem in two or three days, correct and recite it and after when I was thoroughly satisfied with it I went to the kitchen, sat near the Chulla (oven) and consecrated it to

the flame. Thus the best poetry of my childhood was dedicated to Agni Narayan. You might call it unfair on my part to have destroyed that poetry, but my feeling was that I must dedicate to God what belongs to God. I am perfectly sure that it did me no harm, rather it intensified the feeling within. These days much is made of the power of steam. Steam which is dissipated in the air is simply wasted. It is serviceable only when kept closed. Likewise, if this steam of literature is kept closed within, identified with the soul, then nobody loses anything. Nay, it raises one's own faith.

"Later I gave up the home in search of the *Brahman*. I went to Kashi. My love for poetry continued still. Again I would write a poem and when it reached the finished stage I dedicated it to the Ganga. Thus in place of flames I submitted it to the water of the Ganga.

"Another story of that time comes to my mind. My mother used to go to attend lectures on the Gita. She told me one day that these lectures were in Sanskrit language and that she would have preferred if they had been in Marathi. I then fetched for her a translation in prose. She then remarked that a poetical version would have been more to her liking. At last I brought for her a translation in poetry. I myself was not pleased with the same because it was tough. My mother read it and exclaimed that it was as difficult as the Sanskrit one. She enquired of me whether it would not be possible to procure an easier one. Then spontaneously she spoke out, 'Why doest thou not write one for me'? I do not know wherefrom she developed such a confidence in me. She had seen the consecration of the poems to the fire. She might have remembered it. Perhaps if anybody gave me the greatest strength, it was. (Vinoba's throat choked and he sat speechless for two minutes) my mother. She did nothing for me. She could not even teach. She was not a learned woman. I myself taught her letters. But she did one very wholesome thing — she put extreme confidence in me. (Vinoba again became quiet and uttered not a word for one minute). Her very confidence gave me strength. This is magic, this is alchemy. The same magic I found in the Upanishad and in the Shruti. Confidence makes a man strong. When he approaches the Vedas and say, 'We are poor, fallen and helpless,' the Vedas reply, 'No, you are the *Brahman*'. (Vinoba again went into trance for a minute), What an unflinching faith in manhood! So my mother asked me why I didn't do it myself? That thought lingered on in my mind. Several years after, my mother was long since dead, I felt an inclination to write on the Gita in Marathi poetry. Thus Gitai was born. Gitai means Mother Gita. It is now a common thing in Maharashtra and is read from house to house. Why is it so? I think it is born of the dedication, made to the Agni and Ganga in my childhood; it is not something mine. The mother had expressed a desire; It must have inspired the same."

Vinoba went on to state, "As I told you earlier I am no litterateur, but I want the blessings of the litterateurs. I believe that the power of literature approaches the power of God. Some would regard it as impertinence to say like that. What is in the *Brahman* is also in literature. We see only one Ganga, the one that flows on the earth. But the litterateur knows three Gangas, one in the sky, another on the earth and the third in the *patal* (below the earth). So the litterateurs are a great reserve of vast strength. But if I were to ask you to write on Bhoodan it would be sheer impertinence and stupidity. Impertinence because you know your work. You can easily choose what you have to do and what not. Stupidity because no litterateur writes on the bidding of another. It is at once impossible. One writes only when inspired from within. When he sits down with his pen, he hardly feels that he has to do something for the world. Sahityik (litterateur) is one who goes with Atma. Sahityik is a companion of the soul whence he penetrates deep within and when he emerges out, he purifies the whole nature. But none can reach the source where he comes from.

"Our literature has been built up by the devoted efforts of her children who did not consider literature as Laxmi or wealth but as Mother, by those who identified themselves with the people: worked among the people, cared not for kings or monarchs and could not be purchased by money. Tulasidas, Kabir, Tukaram, Potana.... all are literature builders who never depended on the kings and their reliance was only on God. You who are sitting before me are their descendents. You very well appreciate which thought current should be encouraged amidst the people, which inspiration will contribute to their wellbeing. I would only beg of you to follow your inner voice and go on as you feel inspired to do. That would make our country strong and rise up."

Vinoba concluded with the words, "One thing at the end. You are all litterateurs. But as citizens you do own some wealth. I would therefore, appeal to you to contribute some share in this all popular Yajna, now spread throughout the country. I want you to co-operate with the call of the times. What you can give, give it with love. If Bhoodan Yajna, Sampattidan Yajna and Saraswati inspire you for something, please do give that."

5-2-'55

GOODNESS, EVIL AND NON-VIOLENCE

(*By Suresh Ramabhai*)

"In the past, wars and revolutions have been won by the side best organized. If your movement should, at any stage, provoke strong opposition, can you indicate how would you meet it?" This question was put to Vinoba by a thoughtful British journalist, a globe-trotter, who had also served in the last war.

"Well, everything depends on the attitude we take with regard to life as a whole," replied Vinoba. "In case of opposition from some section, we would have to convert it to our side. If they are not ready to listen, the alternative would be not to co-operate with them in their evil motives and actions. They will then lose their force. We don't consider them as our enemies indeed. But we do distinguish goodness from evil. We must co-operate with goodness and offer non-co-operation with evil, non-co-operation inspired by compassion and love. Christ says, 'Don't resist evil.' We add, 'Don't resist evil with evil.' Let us resist evil with goodness as light resists darkness. Power lies with light. There are no such people as bad people. We must create goodwill."

Our friend seemed to be rather unconvinced. He proceeded, "Experience indicates that as long as greed exists, the greedy will try to exploit others and only Law — whose sanction is force — can restrain them. How do you think can the greedy be checked in a society based on non-violence?"

Vinoba smiled and asked, "'As long as greed exists!' — How long will greed exist?" He looked towards the correspondent and waited for an answer. Getting none, Vinoba continued, "Greed will exist so long as you allow it to exist. It has no powers apart from us. If good men who lead the society adopt non-violence things will be all right. And leaders would be good when they are unanimously chosen, not by majority. Should this kind of system follow, there will be no

chance for greed to prosper. Surely, no man is greedy for the sake of mere greed. Because of the money economy there is a craze for money. If we have such an order as will enable people to do work and get what they need, greedy men will turn into good men."

With his doubts cleared, our friend became more specific and thought aloud, "The creation in India of a classless, self-sufficient order based on non-violence would eventually depend for its survival on the creation of similar societies in the rest of the world."

"No," observed Vinoba, "I don't agree here. That my goodness should depend on that of others is not necessary. I can go against the whole world if I follow my path, considering it the right one. One day or another, others would also follow it. What you say is like the communist stand. They say that communism in Russia or China alone is not sufficient or secure as long as the whole world is not converted. This is not what we think. We believe that even one man can stand against the whole world if he is on the right path."

"But men, collectively, are actuated purely by material motives and have no conscience," argued our friend. "How can Satyagraha be then applied in international relations?"

"Do you mean to say," observed Vinoba, "that good people turn into bad ones, when they come together?" After a pause he added, "How can it be? If two good persons combine, goodness would be doubled, would grow stronger. But the assumption that they would countenance evil is not correct. You may say that apart from individuals, governments, armies etc. have no conscience. But why think of government without men or of army without soldiers? There is, you know, something like a social conscience. It is formed out of the collective goodness of centuries. So I think your assumption is not correct."

Turning to the second part of the question, Vinoba remarked, "Nations are very much afraid of each other these days. The U. S. A. feels that she is not strong, while the U. S. S. R. thinks that U. S. A. is getting stronger. They live in fear. It is a vicious circle which has to be broken up. If either of these two powers or some other takes courage to destroy its arms with its own hands, that would pave the way for non-violence and give a lead to the world. I do hope that they would rally round to this path sooner rather than later."

"But how can," inquired our friend, "non-violence be the basis for life of such countries as depend on industry and commerce, which in their turn, rest on the exploitation of greed and on competition?"

"There is no nation in the world which does not produce food. Every country can develop its agriculture. But why should industry and commerce depend on exploitation and competition? Industry means supplying things we don't have. Commerce means helping others. I don't think exploitation or competition should be necessarily their basis. My view is opposite. As I told you in the beginning, if the present economic structure is changed and money economy replaced by, what I should say, human economy, things will be very much different. And we are working for the same through the Bhoodan Yajna programme."

The last question was, "How would India be able to retain her independence amid forces seeking for world domination?"

"There is little to worry about it. One's effort should be towards growing better and helping others to do so. Even bad men coming together will have to shed their badness in order to organize themselves. Don't you say that even thieves have morals?"

Our ex-military friend nodded in assent. Vinoba resumed, "Collective goodness will gradually increase. Unrestrained badness would be checked."

Summing up the whole, Vinoba observed, "Well, I put a poser before you: When good men will come together goodness will increase, when bad men will come together badness will decrease."

Vinoba paused for a while and asked with a smile. "Isn't so?"

"Yes, indeed!" confessed our experienced visitor.

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